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Message Text

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13
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03

RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 RSR-01 EUR-25 PM-07 NSC-10

SS-15 /103 W
---------- 129395
R 040949Z SEPT 73
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7759
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, RP
SUBJECT: DEATH OF CARDINAL SANTOS

1. RUFINO CARDINAL SANTOS, SPIRITUAL LEADER OF THE PHILIPPINES ' 33 MILLION ROMAN CATHOLICS, DIED OF A HEART ATTACK IN MANILA ON SEPT 3. CARDINAL SANTOS, 65, HAD BEEN HOSPITALIZEDIN SERIOUS CONDITION SINCE AN EARLIER STROKE ON JUNE 29. HE WILL BE BURIED ON SEPT 10 AT THE MANILA CATHEDRAL.

2. THE 12TH OF 14 CHILDREN OF TENANT FARMERS IN CENTRAL LUZON, SANTOS ROSE TO BE ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PHILS, AND, PARADOXICALLY, AN ALLY OF THE MOST CONVERSATIVE GROUPS IN THE COUNTRY. HE BECAME ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA IN 1958 AND THUS HEAD OF MOST POPULOUS, WEALTHY AND INFLUENTIAL ARCHDIOCESE IN PHILS. HE WAS NAMED THE FIRST FILIPINO CARDINAL BY POPE JOHN XXIII IN 1960.

3. SANTOS WON A REPUTATION AS A MANGAGER AND BUILDER, WHO ADROITLY ADMINISTERED THE EXTENSIVE FINANCIAL AND PRO-PERTY HOLDINGS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE. WIDELY RESPECTED FOR HIS PERSONAL QUALITIES, HIS CONSERVATIVE --ALMOST
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REACTIONARY --APPROACH TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
MADE HIM A FREQUENT TARGET OF CRITICISM IN RECENT
YEARS BY LIBERAL ELEMENTS WHO BELIEVED THE INFLUENTIAL
PHILIPPINE CHURCH SHOULD BECOME MORE ATTUNED TO THE
NEEDS OF THE POOR. HE WAS CRITICIZED FOR BEING MORE
INTERESTED IN SAVING SOULS THAN FEEDING PEOPLE OR
IMPROVING THEIR TEMPORAL CONDITION.

4. COMMENT: THE DEATH OF SANTOS LEAVES THE KEY POSITION
OF ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA VACANT UNTIL POPE PAUL APPOINTS
A SUCCESSOR. SANTOS' OPPOSITION TO "SOCIAL ACTION"
PROGRAMS, WHICH HE FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED IN HEAVY-HANDED
FASHION , DID MUCH TO PERPETUATE THE CHURCH'S IMAGE AS
A CONSERVATIVE ORGANIZATION, ALLIED WITH THE COUNTRY'S
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ELITE. HIS DEATH COULD RESULT IN
WEAKENING OF THE DOMINANT CONSERVATIVE ELEMENT OF THE
CHURCH AND ENCOURAGE LIBERALS TO PUSH THEIR IDEAS HARDER.
ONE OF THE LEADING CANDIDATES TO SUCCEED SANTOS IS
BISHOP MARIANO GAVIOLA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CATHOLIC
BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES, WHO, WHILE NOT
A MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL WING, IS CONSIDERED MUCH LESS
CONSERVATIVE THAN SANTOS AND HAS THE IMPORTANT ADVANTAGE
OF BEING CLOSE TO PRESIDENT AND MRS. MARCOS.
SULLIVAN

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*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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